

Friends of the Library celebrates a year of success



Brian Bethel, Abilene Reporter- News 5:41 p.m. CDT November 1, 2016



(Photo: Nellie Doneva/Reporter-News)

Abilene's new South Branch Library will open Nov. 19 at 10 a.m., according to agenda at Friends of the Abilene Public Library meeting.

And its opening comes largely because of the efforts of the Friends, who librarian Lori Grumet called the "best in the nation."

"This Friends group has made so many miracles possible here in Abilene," Grumet said. "And on Nov. 19 at 10 a.m., we're going to see another one."

And the Friends' financial situation is actually better than expected, especially given the size and scope of the project, said the group's treasurer, Garrett Smith.

Last year, the Friends' goal was to have \$100,000 left in the bank once construction was finished.

"Right now, it looks like we're going to have \$314,000," said Smith, who was also honored at the luncheon as Volunteer of the Year.

"We collected a little more than we expected, so that's thanks you to especially," he told the group. "We had a great year, the book sale and our galas, and we've been very prudent on everything we've done for this project."

Currently, the Friends has \$960,000 in assets, a "lot more than I thought we'd have," Smith said.

"Last year, when I gave this speech, we'd broken just barely over \$1 million and had a \$1.5 million construction project," he said, noting that so far \$680,000 in construction projects had been paid, leaving \$620,000 outstanding.

The South Branch will maintain its current staffing levels, opening an hour later daily at 10 a.m., but adding Sunday hours from 1-6. More openings on holidays are planned for the future.

"There are a lot of great things that are going to come out of this new location," said Tremain Jackson, South Branch Manager. "We have a lot of programming and a lot of services and a lot of technology going into it."

Programming at the new South Branch will increase by around 130 percent, Jackson said, examples of new programs being Music and Movement for Kids, Weekend Gaming for Teens, and a Novels at Night book club.

"At the previous Danville location, we offered maybe 13-15 programs a month," he said, whereas the new location in December has 50 programs.

Meeting rooms, study areas, quiet reading rooms and other amenities will be available to patrons, including a special teens-only area.

"It's going to be marvelous, you're going to love it," Grumet told the Friends.

Looking to the future, the main library will benefit from work on its lowest floor, the basement, with a goal of improving computer labs, opening up the area to be more accessible and easier to use, and creating a "maker's space."

The latter is a national trend to help people express their creativity by making something, assembling something or participating in a group project.

Some programs of this type are already active at the main library, including a Lego at the Library club, an adult coloring book club, and a group dubbed the "procraftinators," an informal group for crafters to work on projects they might otherwise put by the wayside.

New officers elected at the event are president Tim Lillick, president elect Emerald Cassidy, treasurer Austin Southerland, membership Mary Pizzorno, and secretary Ann O'Dwyer, said Amanda Shelnett, chair of the group's nominating committee.

Incoming members are Becky Crowe, Martha Magee, Wesley Smith, and Austin Southerland.

FTL president Matt Preston gave a special recognition award to Shelnett for her service as part of Tuesday's event.



Tremain Jackson talks about the features of the new South Branch of the Abilene Public Library at the Friends of the Library Annual Meeting Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2016.
(Photo: Nellie Doneva/Reporter-News)



Carrie Casada, left, recognizes the achievements of Volunteer of the Year Garrett Smith, right, at the Friends of the Library Annual Meeting Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2016. (Photo: Nellie Doneva/Reporter-News)



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